

The Legal Bride

By ROBERT CARSON

The Story: The first law case she had ever handled led ABIGAIL JANE FURNIVAL into a series of dizzying adventures and the first romance of her prim young life. Her client was BEN CASTLE, a cowboy movie star and Hollywood playboy, with whom Abigail fell in love against her better judgment. She flew to Las Vegas with Ben, in an effort to settle a gambling debt the cowboy owed to HARRY KALLEN, a night-club owner with underworld connections. Kallen threatened violence against Ben unless the debt was paid. Ben persuaded Abigail to marry him in a quickly arranged ceremony. JACK HALL, a young aviator who loved Abigail and regarded the cowboy as a wastrel, acted as best man. Later, Kallen told Abigail he would take no action against Ben as long as they stayed happily married. Abigail realized that Ben and his business manager, MR. GRAVES, had counted on Kallen's having kind feelings toward her because the gambler had once been saved from a jail sentence by Abigail's father, the late Vincent Furnival. Furious at the deception, she refused to live with Ben when they returned to Beverly Hills; but fearing that Kallen might learn that they were separated, she agreed to stay at the cowboy's home on a platonic basis. She demanded that he reform his reckless way of life, and she made friends with his servants, NACIO and MRS. GEORGE B. HARMONY. While posing for publicity pictures with Ben, Abigail met JAKE HARRIS, publicity man for Allied-Apex Studios, headed by OTTO FRANCIS BIRGIN. Abigail was still deeply in love with the cowboy, but when he tried to make love to her she realized that Ben was still offering only a playboy's love. She fled the Bel Air home and drove away to the apartment she had once shared with a beautician named ALICE NORMAN.

PART FIVE OF SIX PARTS

THE clock on the car dashboard registered the hour of nine, and she reflected that never had so much happened to so few in so short a time. A reassuring light burned in the window on South Reeves Drive. It was ever so much humbler than Altamont Road, but there was no place like home. Abigail was momentarily blinded by a mist of tears. Shaking her head impatiently, she deposited her bags on the doorstep and returned to the car to stagger under the load of the carton of lawbooks. Once that was safely with the rest of the luggage, she opened the door with her key. The front room happened to be occupied, and she had to pause on the threshold.

A young man in a neat blue suit was seated in the best armchair. In his lap was Alice, hugging him tightly. The clinch was broken hastily. Alice's vis-à-vis stood up beside her, putting on his thick-rimmed tortoise-shell spectacles, the kind that clamped behind his ears instead of hooking over them. He was slim and blond, with a narrow, studious face.

"I hope I'm not intruding," Abigail said.

"I beg your pardon," Alice said, rather coldly. "Mrs. Castle, may I present Mr. Austin Tisdale? Mr. Tisdale is assistant cashier of the Beverly Hills branch of the Forty-niner Bank & Trust Company, and we recently discovered mutual interests while discussing one of my overdrafts."

"A great pleasure, I assure you," Abigail said. She made what she hoped was a casual gesture. "Please don't mind me. Go on with what—whatever you were doing. I'll just bring my luggage in—"

"Luggage?" Alice echoed.

Abigail scowled. "Yes, luggage! I've left my husband."

"My gosh!" Alice said. "Why? Tell your Aunt Alice."

"Because of what we both feared," Abigail said. "He made—uh—improper advances to me tonight."

"The dirty rat!" Alice exclaimed.

Austin Tisdale had been following their exchange with undivided attention. This time Alice noticed him.

"Mrs. Castle has been having trouble with her husband, Austin," she explained. "He's been trying to make love to her."

Tisdale clucked sympathetically and shook his head. Then he stared at the women, and his jaw dropped.

"Don't let me make a nuisance of myself," Abigail said. "My luggage is right here on the doorstep and I'll hurry."

"Nonsense," Alice said. "You must sit down and try to be calm. Austin, bring her stuff in for her. Put it in the bedroom."

She tenderly removed Abigail's coat, led her to the chair lately vacated by Tisdale, and knelt at her feet and held her hands. Tisdale began the disposal of the luggage.

"A.J.," Alice said, "forgive my first surprise and displeasure. I am honored and relieved that you have come home to my protection. My shoulder is available for your tears."

"I don't want to cry," Abigail said. "I'm so damned sore and humiliated that I can't see straight. My task is to forget life and begin anew."

Tisdale came back and stood watching them. He continued to have trouble with a slack jaw.

"You have made me the happiest woman in the world," Alice said. "Frankly, I feared you had succumbed to the cowboy. I thought the atmosphere of moonlight and roses would knock you cold. Now I realize that you are too fine a type ever to let some lousy husband romance you. A.J., this is a proud night for me."

"Do not fear," Abigail assured her. "He won't lay a hand on me, come what may." She rose and smiled sadly. "But enough of my little tempest in a teacup. The rest is silence. Go out and have your fun, you two. Forget about me."

"Don't say that," Alice protested. "We'll stick with her, won't we, Austin?"

"Yes," Tisdale said.

"We won't let her door go unguarded tonight, will we?" Alice said.

"No," Tisdale said.

Abigail went in the bedroom, locked the door, sat on her own bed, and smoked a cigarette. She determined not to consider the intricacies of her love life.

Suddenly she remembered that she would need a job. She decided to call her father's old friend, Mr. Calhoun, who had promised her a job as a clerk, though he spurned her services as a lawyer.

Alice was back in Austin Tisdale's lap, and Abigail coughed warningly. They got up. Tisdale put on his glasses.

"Excuse me," Abigail said. "I simply have to make an important telephone call."

"Austin, comb your hair," Alice said. "It's mussed."

"Oh," Tisdale said.

Abigail rang Harrison F. Calhoun at his home number. He answered in person.

"This is Abigail Furnival," Abigail said. "I regret bothering you—"

"You mean Mrs. Ben Castle," Calhoun replied heartily, "and you're not bothering me. I saw your picture in the newspaper, Abigail, and I must say I

never realized how well you look in a bathing suit. You have a delightful figure, my dear. No wonder that cowboy was enchanted."

"Yes," Abigail said. "Thank you very much. Listen, Mr. Calhoun, is that job in your office still open? I want it."

"What?" Calhoun said.

"Circumstances have altered," Abigail said, "and I am again alone in the world and have to earn a living. Will you take me on?"

"Why, yes," Calhoun said.

"I hope I haven't put you to any trouble," Abigail said.

"None whatever," Calhoun said in accents of pity. "Oh, you poor kid! How soon you have discovered the worm in the apple! Other women?"

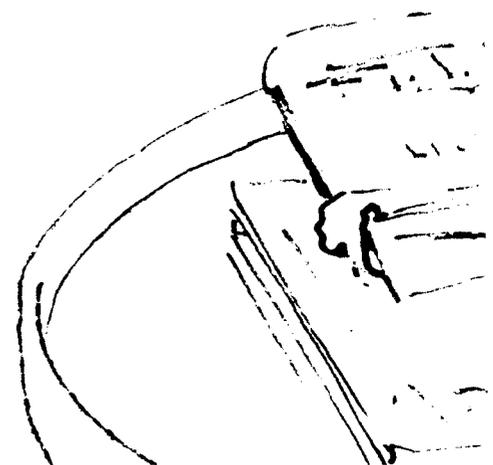
"Not other women," Abigail said. "Me. He kept making passes—" She looked up, gazed into two pairs of absorbed eyes belonging to Austin Tisdale and Aunt Alice, and had to stop and moisten her lips. "I'll explain another time, Mr. Calhoun. When shall I report for work?"

"Monday morning at eight thirty," Calhoun said. "Simpson & Calhoun will stand by you, Abigail. We'll bring that fellow before the bar of justice, don't you fear. I promise you old man Simpson will handle the divorce personally."

"Yes, yes," Abigail said hurriedly. "Good night, Mr. Calhoun. Thank you." She hung up.

"I hate to see you throw (Continued on page 32)

Abigail crossed unwillingly and placed herself on Ben's knees. He peered around her to grin at Kallen. "This is the most wonderful experience of my life," she said



ILLUSTRATED BY STAN KLIMLEY

CONTINUING THE HILARIOUS LOVE STORY
OF A MAN-SHY LADY LAWYER AND A MOVIE
COWBOY WHO WASN'T SHY OF ANYTHING





"Say, Persky," Howie said, "I bet you never thought you'd be serving beer to a Marksman"

The Marksman

By ROLAND A. MARTONE

WHEN two guys have been through what Howie and Persky went through together, there's a kind of bond between them that's pretty hard to break down. Sure, the passing of time dims the memories of specific events—whether it was Howie's grenade that got the three Japs in that cave, or Persky's. Both won the Silver Star in some pretty stiff action, but it won't be long before they won't know who got his medal first—or why. Already they can't agree on whether they took Aslito Airfield on Saipan in one week or two. Time gets warped after it's passed. But the bond stays strong.

They'll protect the bond, too. Howie and Persky are very different from each other in temperament; they might not protect each other any more—not in the same way they used to when there was death in the air—but they'll protect the bond. Whether they do it knowingly or instinctively doesn't matter. Each will come up with the protection when it's needed.

I saw it happen. I saw the bond protected the other day when Howie and I were killing some time at Persky's place and a G.I. walked in.

There were a lot of empty stools at Persky's bar on the day the kid came in, but the young G.I. hesitated before he stepped up to one as though he weren't sure which stool he wanted to sit on.

For about a minute, he looked at the brand names stuck on the mirror, as if he had to think about his choice. But when he opened his mouth, all he said was, "Beer."

The kid took a sip or two. Then he put his glass down to loosen his tie—and from where Howie and I were sitting around the bend of the bar, we couldn't help noticing the dangling medal.

Collier's SHORT SHORT

"What ya got there, soldier?" Howie asked him. "The Croy de Gwere?"

The kid jerked his head around quickly, as though Howie's voice had startled him.

"Naw," he said. "Naw. It's just a Marksman's badge." He didn't sound like anything. Just flat.

There was an awkward pause, as if everybody was waiting for the kid to keep explaining.

"We was shooting out on the rifle range last month. I hit the target enough times to get a Marksman's score. That ain't *too* good."

Howie whistled. "Marksman, huh? Was it tough?"

The G.I. pulled at his beer. "Naw. I already told you it wasn't such a hot rating. Sharpshooter and Expert—they're the best ratings. I didn't even come close to them." He was on the defensive.

I tried to think what ratings Persky or Howie had made on the target ranges, but I couldn't remember.

"Say, Persky," Howie said across the bar. "I bet you never thought you'd be serving beer to a Marksman today, did ya?"

Persky was wiping glasses. He threw a dirty look at Howie that just about said: "Lay off the kid!"—but Howie didn't catch it. He was turned sideways, facing the G.I.

"Boy, I bet you could of done a job on a bunch of Japs." Howie leaned forward and puckered his forehead, as if he were really interested in the kid's Army life. "I bet you could of hit them coming through a sugar-cane field, for instance, and never hit a single sugar cane. I bet them Japs would know they were up against a real Marksman."

"I never was in any sugar-cane field with any Japs," the kid admitted quickly. "I never was

outside the U.S.A. Maybe you was in a cane field. Maybe you know about that kind of shooting."

Howie ignored the question in the G.I.'s voice. He shifted the talk right back into this country.

"Tell me, fella," he said, "do they treat you pretty bad? I bet you don't get a helluva lot to eat in them Army camps nowadays, huh? They take it from you and send it over to Europe, huh?"

"He already said he never was out of the U.S.A.," Persky reminded Howie. "What's he supposed to know about Europe?"

The kid looked a little strained in the face. He wasn't sure whether Persky's butting in would help the conversation any.

"Look," he said. "I got my worries about Army life, see? If you wanna know what they are, why don't ya join up yourself?" The G.I. clipped off his words. As soon as he said them, he looked like he wished he'd kept his mouth shut.

HOWIE ignored the G.I.'s question completely. "Tell-me, kid! Tell-me," he was using a soft, soothing voice. "You can tell me, I understand. It's really tough, huh?"

"Maybe he ain't got anything to tell," Persky interrupted.

Again the kid didn't know whether to be grateful for a crack like that. But still, Persky was checkmating Howie's line of talk with every interruption.

Howie got up from his stool and started moving toward the door marked "Mr." As he passed behind the kid, he gave Persky a wink.

"Excuse me a minute, soldier," Howie said very politely. "Make yourself comfortable, and when I come back, you can tell me all about it."

"That's the second one today," the kid said.

Persky looked up.

"I know this is 1949 and the shooting stopped a long time ago," the kid's voice went on, sounding very young and high now. "This guy keeps asking me about the Army. How do I know what to tell him? F'rall I know he coulda been in the Army a month overseas for every day I been in uniform—"

Persky cleared his throat to speak, but the G.I. went on: "And maybe he never seen a single minute in the Army. How do I know? 'Tell me about it—it's tough, eh?' " the kid mimicked. "That makes twice today!" he repeated. "Twice!"

Persky put down the wiping cloth.

"Look, kid," he said. "People come in here on weekdays, they feel like they gotta talk to anybody else who comes in—and talking sometimes makes trouble. Why don't you drink up now, before he gets back, huh? No use hanging around just to get into an argument."

"You're right," the kid said. He said it right on the heels of Persky's little speech, as though he had been waiting for it all along. He had been hunched over the bar, and when he finished his beer and got up, he was still hunched up. That Marksman's medal seemed to be weighing him down. Persky looked like he wanted to say something else. And just as the kid was stepping away from the stool, Persky said it.

"That guy in there," he nodded toward the "Mr." door. "That guy never left the States. He worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard right through World War II. Used to cash his checks in here."

I didn't say a word. It was then that I realized about the bond. Persky couldn't let Howie hurt this kid without having it grow a little weaker.

The G.I. hiked up his shoulders to pull his loose blouse into a better drape over his chest, and it made the Marksman's medal swing, wide and free.

"So long," he said. Loud—as though he hoped Howie would hear him and realize his leaving was not a retreat.

Persky started to fumble for a glass under the bar. But he looked up once more.

"Good luck, kid," he said. He said it softly, and with no malice. Not at all as if he were talking to a kid who had made him tell one of the worst lies a guy like Persky could ever hope to tell. THE END

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